

In the Specification

Please replace paragraph 6 with the following amended paragraph 6:

[0006] The Clarke (U.S. Patent No. 1,995,243), Heath (U.S. Patent No. 991,443), Peng (U.S. Patent No. 462,162), and Houghland (U.S. Patent No. 887,942) patents typically involve the use of laces or ties. Opening and closing the items appear to require the laces or ties to be tied and untied each time the shoe is to be worn or removed.

Please replace paragraph 7 with the following amended paragraph 7:

[0007] The Semouha (U.S. Patent No. 4,507,878) patent also appears to use laces or ties to open and close a shoe. Although the laces do not appear to be tied or untied each time the shoe is to be worn or removed, the laces seem to be slid downward toward the ankle area of the shoe. In this position, a user's foot may be slipped in and out of the shoe, which may prove uncomfortable since the foot is squeezed each time it passes through the ankle area of the shoe. This problem may be even more troublesome should a user's foot be large or should the user have difficulty maneuvering his/her foot through what is believed to be a generally tight channel.

Please replace paragraph 8 with the following amended paragraph 8:

[0008] The Lopez Saiz (U.S. Patent No. 5,347,695) patent seems to relate to a device that facilitates repeated opening and closing of a shoe. However, the device appears to be easily dislodged from the shoe and, therefore, may permit the shoe to be accidentally untied or opened.

Please replace paragraph 32 with the following amended paragraph 32:

[0032] As shown, receiver 20 is secured to a side 17 of an aperture 16 of item 14 and, to close aperture 16, clasp 30 and, therefore, lace 18 are joined to receiver 20. Releasing clasp 30 from receiver 20 opens aperture 16. By releasing clasp 30 from receiver 20, lace 18 is also removed without necessitating that lace 18 be untied or removed from clasp 30. Therefore, rejoining clasp 30 to receiver 20 not only closes aperture ~~30~~ 16, but provides consistent tension to lace 18 after clasp 30 is joined to receiver 20. Hence, the invention facilitates opening and closing aperture 16 while providing consistent, or repeatable, tension to lace 18 and obviating the occurrence of item 14 being closed too tight or loose.

Please replace paragraph 34 with the following amended paragraph 34:

[0034] Clasp 30 is made of a material having an elastic characteristic so that, when the opening force is removed, clasp 30 and lace end 42, which is an elastically compressible loop returns to its original shape, shown in FIG. 2b, which is also the closed position of clasp 30. Upon removal of the opening force, lace end 42 expands from its compressed position shown in FIG. 2a and, as a result, first part 34 and second part 36 also return to their original shape by moving toward one another. First and second parts 34, 36 automatically move toward one another upon the opening force being removed and automatically stop at distance A'. As can be seen, distance A is greater than distance A' and both distances may be any arbitrarily picked number. All that is required is that distance A be greater than receiver length L and distance A' be smaller than receiver length L so that clasp 30 may be engaged and disengaged with receiver 20. The distances A, A' in relation to length L are described in more detail below.

Please replace the Abstract with the following Abstract:

~~The invention relates to a method and apparatus for providing an~~ An improved
~~lacing method and apparatus as provided, having system having~~ a clasp with an
anchoring end and a lace end, where the lace end is adapted to hold a lace. An
anchoring end is also included having a first part and a second part where the first and
second parts are movable away from and toward one another. The closing mechanism
also has a receiver with a first receptacle and a second receptacle for engaging the first
and second parts, respectively, and wherein the clasp is removably joinable to the
receiver when the first and second parts are engaged with the first and second
receptacles and, when the first and second parts are disengaged with the first and
second receptacles, the clasp is separable from the receiver.